



Press Release

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By: Sgt. Balinda O'Neal

Alaska Army National Guardsman on track to West Point

CAMP DENALI, Alaska—As a high school dropout, Spc. David Huff has accomplished more than he ever expected in the past three and a half years.

Upon completing the Alaska Military Youth Academy, enlisting in the Alaska Army National Guard, and graduating from the National Guard Patriot Academy, Huff is now bound for the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School and U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

After an altercation led to suspension at the end of his freshman year in high school, Huff was left six credits behind and with a diminishing grade point average.

"I had to make up those credits, and I had an attitude problem," said Huff, 21, a signal support systems specialist for the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard. "So I dropped out of high school and was accepted into the AMYA."

The AMYA Challenge Program is designed to intervene and reclaim the lives of Alaska's at-risk youth and produce graduates with the skills to succeed as adults.

"I got angry really easily and let opportunities that I could have had go by the wayside under my own free-will and accord," Huff said. "I did well at the AMYA but still left there dealing with some issues of immaturity."

Two months after he talked to a recruiter, Huff enlisted in the Alaska Army National Guard and took advantage of another opportunity by attending the National Guard Patriot Academy.

While lack of funding closed this pilot program January this year, the Patriot Academy offered qualified recruits the opportunity to finish high school and earn college credit while giving back to the community.

"A Patriot Academy instructor and additional role model got him refocused on the longer objective term in life of being successful and to really go for a diploma and look at other options," said Brig. Gen. Mike Bridges, commander of the Alaska Army National Guard.

"One of those other options was the potential to receive a National Guard nomination to West Point from the Alaska Army Guard."

With no knowledge of West Point, Huff began researching the academy that is synonymous with educating, training and inspiring many of the Army's greatest leaders throughout the past 200 years.

"To see the people who have actually gone to West Point and to see the things they have done, that's a goal worth aiming for," Huff said. "The experience that you get there, the different people that influence you, it's second to none."

With thousands of students applying to West Point each year, it is an exceptional honor being accepted for admission. After being denied admission twice, Huff was finally admitted into the West Point Preparatory School on his third attempt.

"I was taking college English, Trigonometry, and Chemistry, and they saw I was doing well," Huff said. "I'm extremely grateful they recognized the academic and leadership potential in me because usually when they say 'no' the first time, it stays 'no.'"

With roots in the Alaska Army National Guard, Huff will be able to share what he's learned here and also expand on that, giving even more to the country with this new venture.

"We will feel bad about losing a great Soldier from our ranks who has potential and is doing well, but the Alaska Army National Guard is sharing this young man and his potential with the nation through service," Bridges said. "He is succeeding in a great way, which makes us very proud of being his host family unit."

"For me to even have the opportunity to go to the prep school is a blessing in and of itself," Huff said. "Through all this, I've learned that you really can't go anywhere unless you have a goal in life."

With a growing list of people Huff attributes to his success, there are two people that stand out – his father, Darryl Huff, and retired Gen. Colin Powell, U.S. Army.

"Apart from God, I couldn't have made it this far without my dad," Huff said. "It's amazing what God has done for me, and my dad always knew I could do better and pushed me."

Huff has nothing but accolades to say about Powell after reading his book *My American Journey* while attending the AMYA. Huff's mantra in life came from the book: "There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure."

"I changed my mindset and my history of getting in trouble into something positive," Huff said. "You get the right mindset, you get hungry, and you go after what you want."

Huff will be leaving for the West Point Prep School by the end of the month.

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Cutlines:**130618-Z-MW427-0085**

Spc. David Huff, a signal support systems specialist for the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard, runs during a physical training session on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in June. Huff will be leaving Alaska in July to attend the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School as a cadet candidate. Photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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Spc. David Huff, a signal support systems specialist for the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard, takes a break from lifting weights during a physical training session on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in June. Huff will be leaving Alaska in July to attend the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School as a cadet candidate. Photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

Huff

David Huff, cadet with the Alaska Military Youth Academy, smiles with his parents, Darryl and Bridgett, after receiving a citation in June 2010 from the 26th Alaska Legislature honoring him for being chosen as the 2010 Boys and Girls Club Youth of the Year for Alaska. Huff graduated from the Alaska Military Youth Academy in August 2010 and went on to join the Alaska Army National Guard. He is now headed the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School as a cadet candidate at the end of this month. Photo by Lt. Col. Guy Hayes, Alaska National Guard

To view a video story:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3s7lAx481rU&feature=youtu.be>